

Demetrio Basilio LAKAS
(Phonetic: LAKahs)

PANAMA

President (since
December 1969)

Addressed as:
Mr. President



A ceremonial Chief of State, Demetrio Lakas was initially appointed to his current position by Panamanian strongman Brig. Gen. Omar Torrijos; the Constitutional Assembly elected him to the post in September 1972. He advises his old friend Torrijos on policy and handles administrative and protocol matters. Lakas believes that Panama's national dignity and economic well-being require a speedy revision of the Panama Canal Treaty.

Lakas attended high school in the Canal Zone. He holds degrees in architecture and business administration from Texas Wesleyan University and Texas Technological College. After a number of years as a businessman and construction engineer, he joined the Torrijos government in 1968 as social security director.

The President has visited the United States several times and greatly admires its productive capacity. He has also traveled to Western Europe and Mexico. Lakas, 51, is affable, astute and frank. He speaks English fluently, with a Texas accent acquired during his college days. Friends and acquaintances usually call him "Jimmy." Fishing and boating are his favorite sports. Lakas is married. He and his wife, Fania, have three sons.

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